THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • TUESDAY • MARCH 04, 2025 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 20 • LATE CITY EDITION

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WOMEN BORROWERS GROW 22% OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS: REPORT

The report, released by NITI Aayog CEO BV R Subrahmanyam on Monday, showed bulk of the loans was for meeting consumption demand

SELF-MONITORING CREDIT HABIT SEES SPIKE

The report, published by TransUnion CIBIL, Women Entrepreneurship Platform of NITI Aayog and MicroSave Consulting said as of December 2024, 2.7 crore women were monitoring their credit, a 42% spike from the previous year. Women's share of the total self-monitoring base increased to 19.43% in December 2024, up from 17.89% in 2023, it said | P13

WOMEN MAKE UP 35% OF BUSINESS LOANS

- The report released on Monday said that among the women borrowers, 60% were from semi-urban and rural areas
- Since 2019, women's share in business loan has increased by 14% and their share in gold loans has grown by 6%, with women accounting for 35% of business borrowers by December 2024, the report said

15 crore

JOBS WILL BE CREATED IF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IS PROMOTED

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Biz advisory panel okays salary hike for legislators

BANSY KALAPPA @ Bengaluru

IN a move set to spark a controversy, lawmakers are poised to enjoy a lucrative salary hike after the Business Advisory Committee, led by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, gave its in-principle nod for the hike on Monday.

The high-powered meeting, attended by Assembly Opposition Leader R Ashoka, DCM DK Shivakumar, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil, Speaker UT Khader and Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti, reportedly saw no resistance to the proposal.

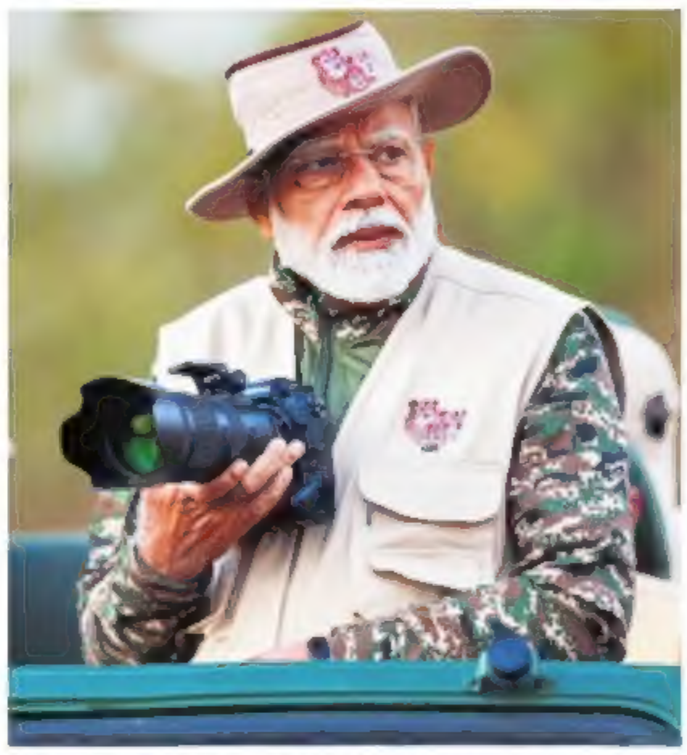
Though the exact figures remain under wraps, sources confirm that a significant increase is on the horizon, to be formalised in the current legislature session. Currently, a legislator pockets around Rs 1 lakh in salary, along with a slew of perks, bringing their monthly earnings to over Rs 3 lakh.

Interestingly, when the BJP-led government hiked MLA salaries in February 2022, there was little pushback from Congress or JDS.

Congress has abruptly rescheduled its Legislature Party meeting from March 4 to 10. Sources suggested that the change comes in response to discontent among party MLAs, who are reportedly frustrated over lack of development funds in the last 20 months of the government. The government has heavily prioritised the guarantee schemes, leaving many legislators dissatisfied.

To pacify its members, Siddaramaiah is expected to allocate development funds in the budget on March 7.

BUDGET SESION STARTS: P4



PM Narendra Modi during a lion safari at Gir Wildlife Sanctuary, on the occasion of World Wildlife Day, in Gujarat's Junagadh district on Monday | PTI

PM meet gives K'taka hope to revive great Indian bustard

BOSKY KHANNA @Bengaluru

AMID a slew of wildlife conservation plans that Prime Minister Narendra Modi discussed on Monday while chairing the seventh meeting of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) at Sasan in Gujarat's Junagadh district, particular mention of reviving the almost-extinct population of great Indian bustard (GIB) lifted the hopes of forest and wildlife officials in Karnataka.

In August 2024, the state's GIB sighting was just two, at Siruguppa in Ballari. But this year, only one was sighted in Bidar — the smallest sighted population of this endangered bird species in India. The shocking decline in the GIB population is being attributed to poaching, habitat loss, collisions with windmills, power lines and vehicles. "Before it is completely wiped out, collaborative work needs to be done," a wildlife official said.

At the meeting, the PM announced a National Great Indian Bustard Conservation Action Plan and a task force, stressing on the need to upscale conservation efforts for GIBs. Karnataka forest officials are particularly elated as they had earlier discussed and proposed to the Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) to include Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh along with Karnataka to revive the GIB population. P4

Bear children soon, so TN wouldn't lose seats: CM to couples

Call comes ahead of all-party meet on delimitation

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Nagapattinam

CHIEF Minister M K Stalin on Monday encouraged newly-married couples to bear children as early as possible, citing the proposed delimitation of parliamentary constituencies that is expected to be done on the basis of population. His comment comes ahead of the March 5 all-party meet he has called for to discuss the issue.

Solemnising a wedding organised by DMK's Nagapattinam district secretary N Gowthaman's family, Stalin said it is no longer necessary to advise newly-married couples to postpone childbearing.

"A scenario has currently developed where parliamentary constituencies are delimited on the basis of population and the number of MPs would be higher when the population is high. Hence, I would not ask the couples to postpone their childbearing like in earlier times and, rather, would encourage them to bear children as early as possible," the CM said.

Chief Minister M K Stalin

The DMK and other parties in south India have raised concerns about a proportional loss of representation when delimitation is done, according to the 84th amendment, on the basis of the first census completed after 2026 (the 2021 census has not yet been conducted).

Rework formula on population skew, says TDP

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

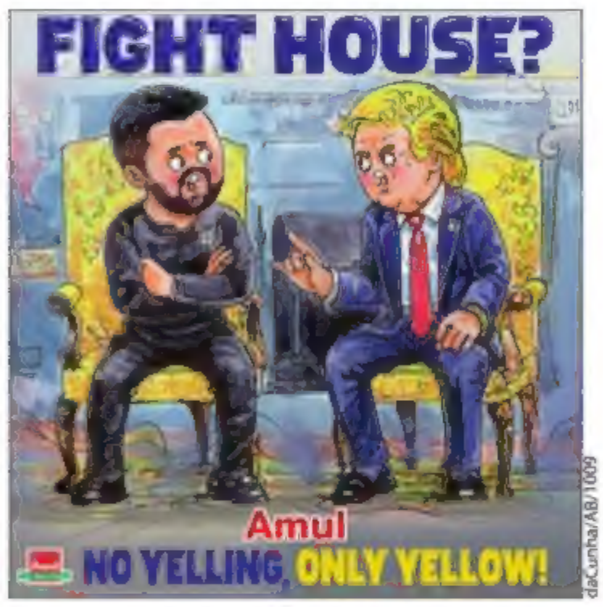
WITH the delimitation row intensifying, the NDA government's key ally Telugu Desam Party (TDP) on Monday said the current delimitation formula needs rework to address the concerns of the South.

He expressed confidence that the Centre has taken cognizance of the issue, adding Union home minister Amit Shah's recent 'pro rata' statement was a signal in the right direction.

Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu

TDP parliamentary party leader Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu said the reconfiguration of parliamentary seats based on the current census data could drastically cut their representation in the Lok Sabha.

"If the number of seats is increased on the existing formula of population census, Southern states will lose a considerable number of seats. That will invariably reduce our bargaining power in the foreseeable future in Parliament. We are seeing it after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh. Our bargaining power has been reduced compared to a big state with big numbers," he said.



UP woman executed by UAE on Feb 15

SHEKHAR SINGH @ New Delhi

A 33-year-old woman from Uttar Pradesh's Banda district on death row in the United Arab Emirates was executed on February 15, but it was communicated to the Indian embassy only on February 28, the Ministry of External Affairs told the Delhi High Court on Monday. The submission was made during the hearing of a plea filed by the woman's father seeking to know her whereabouts.

"The authorities are providing all possible assistance; her cremation will be held on March 5," Additional Solicitor General Chetan Sharma said, adding that arrangements were being made to enable the woman's family to travel to Abu Dhabi to perform her last rites.

With no legal recourse left, Justice Sachin Datta disposed of the plea, calling the entire episode a "sad and unfortunate" incident.

Shahzadi was working as a caregiver in Abu Dhabi when her employer's infant son passed away on December 7, 2022, after a routine vaccination. Thereafter, a video surfaced showing her confessing to the crime. However, her father alleged it was obtained through torture by her employer. The employer's family handed her over to the Abu Dhabi police on February 10, 2023 . She was sentenced to death on July 31, 2023 and the appellate court dismissed her appeal on February 28, 2024. The MEA said the Indian embassy extended all help including filing mercy petitions.

SC: Visually-impaired can't be denied jobs in lower judiciary

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY @ New Delhi

IN a landmark verdict, the Supreme Court on Monday ruled that visually-impaired persons cannot be denied the opportunity of employment in judicial services and struck down provisions of the Madhya Pradesh Judicial Service Rules that excluded them.

The court said, "It is high time that we view the right against disability-based discrimination, as recognised in the RPwD Act (Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act) 2016, in the same stature as a fundamental right, thereby ensuring that no candidate is denied consideration solely on account of their disability."

The two-judge bench, headed by justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan, pronounced the judgment on a batch of petitions — including a representation from a visually-impaired candidate's mother from Madhya Pradesh — for denying quota to these candidates in judicial services of certain states. The candidate's mother had last year written to the then CJI challenging a rule in the Madhya Pradesh Judicial Services (Recruitment and Service Conditions) Rules that prevented visually impaired candidates from being appointed in the state judicial services. The court converted the letter into a *suo motu* petition and decided to hear it.

Justice Mahadevan held that visually impaired candidates cannot be said to be 'not suitable' for judicial service.

EXPRESS READ

DIG transferred after clash with senior

Bengaluru: Days after DIG Vartika Katiyar wrote to the chief secretary making certain allegations against her senior IPS officer Roopa D Moudgil, the state government has transferred her from the Internal Security Division (ISD) | P3

Rates fixed for vehicle location device

Bengaluru: The transport department has fixed prices for vehicle location tracking device (VLTD) and panic buttons following complaints from vehicle owners that such devices are being sold by empanelled vendors at exorbitant prices | P5

SOARING HIGH

KIA breaks records for flyers, flights in February last week

S LALITHA @ Bengaluru

THE last week of February turned out to be a record-shattering week for the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA). It broke the record for flyers and flights since its launch on May 24, 2008.

In an exclusive interaction with *TNIE*, Chief Operating Officer (COO), Bangalore International Airport Ltd — which operates KIA, Satyaki Raghunath said, "The highest number of passengers recorded on a single day was on February 23 with 1,29,466 flyers passing through the airport. On an average, the airport handles around 1,18,000 passengers daily."

Four days later, it broke its all-time record for takeoff and landing of aircraft. "On February 27, we recorded 795 Air Traffic Movements (ATMs), another major milestone for us."

A major infrastructure work under way is the Western Crossfield Taxiway (WCT) that will connect the existing runways of the airport. CONTINUED ON: P2

Cong leader gets no (K)Shama for body-shaming Rohit

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THE Congress on Monday distanced itself from its national spokesperson Shama Mohamed's 'body shaming' remarks on India cricket captain Rohit Sharma, saying that the party "does not endorse any statements" that undermine the legacy of sporting icons.

A day before India versus Australia Champions Trophy semifinal match in Dubai, a needless controversy erupted after Shama, in her now-deleted post, said Sharma is "fat for a sportsman" and "Need to lose weight! And of course the most unimpressive Captain India has ever had!" And TMC leader Saugata Roy echoed her.

The Congress was quick to respond after strong backlash from cricket fans and BJP leaders. In a statement on X, Congress leader Pawan Khera asked Shama to delete her social media posts and exercise greater caution in future. "Dr. Shama Mohammed, National Spokesperson of the Indian National Congress, made certain remarks about a cricketing legend that do not reflect party's position," he said. "She has been asked to delete the social media posts from X and has been advised to exercise greater caution in the future. The Indian National Congress holds the contributions of sporting icons in the highest regard and does not endorse any statements that undermine their legacy," he added.

The BJP waded into the controversy, accusing the Congress of 'body-shaming' and disrespecting the World Cup champion. Responding to a post praising Sharma, Shama asked what was so world class about him when compared to his predecessors like Saurav Ganguly, Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid, M S Dhoni, Virat Kohli, Kapil Dev and Ravi Shastri. "What is so world-class about him when compared to his predecessors? He is a mediocre captain as well as a mediocre player who got lucky to be the captain," she wrote.